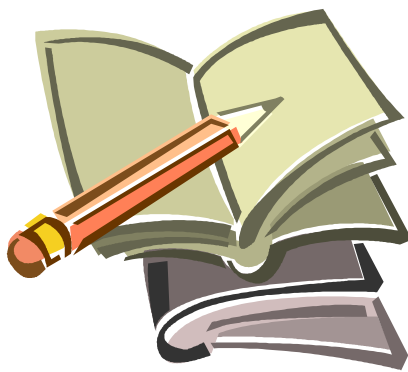


Summary of 2004 USDA Data Users Meeting



October 18, 2004 Chicago,
Illinois

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250



2004 USDA Data Users Meeting
October 18, 2004
Hampton Inn & Suites

Agenda	12:00 p.m.	Registration
	1:00	Introduction and Overview Rich Allen National Agricultural Statistics Service
	1:10	Agency Reviews Erin Morris Agricultural Marketing Service Joy Harwood Economic Research Service Randy Zeitner Foreign Agricultural Service Steve Wiyatt National Agricultural Statistics Service Gerald Bange World Agricultural Outlook Board Venita Powell U.S. Census Bureau
	2:00	Open forum for questions and comments from participants
	3:15	Break
	3:30	Open forum continues
	4:30	Concluding comments
	4:45	Special Presentation: Commodity Market Information System Milton Ericksen & Gerald Bange, WAOB



<http://www.usda.gov/nass/>



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural
Marketing
Service

STOP 0201 – Room 3071-S
1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
Washington, DC 20250

Agricultural Marketing Service 2004

The Agricultural Marketing Service includes six commodity programs—Cotton, Dairy, Fruit and Vegetable, Livestock and Seed, Poultry, and Tobacco. The programs employ specialists who provide standardization, grading, and market news services for those commodities. They enforce such Federal Laws as the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act and the Federal Seed Act.

AMS commodity programs also oversee marketing agreements and orders, administer research and promotion programs, and purchase commodities for Federal food programs.

CURRENT ISSUES OF INTEREST

MANDATORY PRICE REPORTING:

The Livestock Mandatory Reporting Act of 1999 (Act) contains a five year sunset provision. This requires that Congress take some action by October 22, 2004, or livestock mandatory reporting will be discontinued. At this time, the industry has recommended that Congress extend the Act for 1 year to provide sufficient time to for the industry to formulate recommendations for changing the Act when it is reopened.

DATAMART

The Datamart is a recent addition to the Market News Service information system designed to provide public access to previously released historical report data gathered under the Mandatory Price Reporting Act. It is web based and expected to be available by the end of this year. Data will be available from selected reports for slaughter cattle, sheep and swine, also boxed beef, cow beef and lamb meat. A user will be able to choose one of the reports, select the date range and specific data needed and generate a query report. The results may then be downloaded in the user's choice of three formats

WEB PORTAL PROJECT:

The Market News portal for access to fruit and vegetable data is near completion and is expected to be available January 05. The portal promises to significantly enhance the level of customer service in a number of ways. Among these, the portal will provide customers with real-time, web-based access to daily and historical AMS Market News information, the ability to customize the site to meet the individual needs of the customer, and options for downloadable formats for Market News reports or data. Data for livestock and grain are the next commodities to be made available through the portals access.

APHIS IMPORT DATA

APHIS is Market News primary data source for imported shipments of fresh cut flowers, fruits and vegetables. APHIS initiated an online database website January 2004. The APHIS web site allows reporters to collect imported shipments by week or month without having to leave the office. Market News is collecting data from many additional ports or airports than we have in the past. This has greatly added to Market News coverage of import data for cut flowers, fruits and vegetables.

The new APHIS web site has:

- expanded the ports and airports covered,
- improved the timeliness of shipments,
- greatly expanding the volume of imports published by Market News.

Timely and accurate shipment data is very import to everyone in the produce industry. The volume of imported cut flower, fruits and vegetables is accelerating and Market News is committed to making sure this information is available to the industry.

ELECTONIC DATA COLLECTION

Market News, with the endorsement of the California Grape & Tree Fruit League, California Tree Fruit Agreement, California Table Grape Commission and the California Strawberry Commission, initiated electronic data collection of grape, stone fruit and strawberry shipments. With the support and cooperation of the industry, Market News had a tremendous success in collecting accurate and timely shipments.

INTERNATIONAL REPORTS SECTION UPDATE

Market News has published a notice in the Federal Register requesting comments on a survey to be posted on our website. The Fruit and Vegetable Market News Survey specifically asks for feedback regarding international markets in order to improve global market reporting and dissemination. We are nearing the final approval stages and hope to post this survey on our website by the end of the year.

CHANGES TO AMS REPORTS AND NEW REPORTS

Fruit and Vegetable:

New celery F.O.B. report was issued out of Central and Western Arizona.
Peach and Nectarine F.O.B. reports from California included initial prices for White Flesh varieties
Plum report from California included initial prices for Interspecific (pluots) varieties.

Livestock and Grain:

Effective January 3, 2005, the boxed beef cutout will be changed from the current two weight breakouts (600-750 lbs, 750-900 lbs) to one weight breakout (600-900 lbs).

Livestock and Grain Market News has discontinued subscription mail service. All publications will be available via the Internet.

Poultry:

In January 2004, Poultry began releasing the Weekly Certified Organic Poultry and Egg report. This report provides price information for the most commonly produced and traded organic poultry and egg products. Certified Organic poultry and eggs is one of the fastest growing segments of the organic industry and this report was created in response to a lack of available market information.

As of October 1, 2004, Poultry Market News has discontinued subscription mail service. This move reflects the dominance of the Internet as the information sharing tool of choice and the efficiency and cost savings to AMS associated with Internet use. Printed copies of poultry market publications will no longer be available. All Poultry Market News reports and publications are offered free-of-charge on the Market News website and mailing will continue on a case-by-case basis as subscriptions are phased out.

Poultry Market News is developing an electronic version of its Annual Summary report to be launched in 2005. The old printed format will be replaced with a more dynamic and user-friendly electronic format. Hard-bound copies of the Annual will no longer be available after 2005.

AMS Contacts:

Agricultural Marketing Service:

Web site: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/>

E-Mail to: AMSWebmaster@usda.gov

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ERS is enhancing the value and transparency of our market analysis and outlook program. We're developing new initiatives, and received the Secretary's Honor Award for program reinvention in 2004.

Improved Quality of Communication

Outlook Audience Page—Updated weekly, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/outlook/> provides a critical link to our outlook publications, data, and “e-outlooks” on special topics. Also see ERS’s new data page (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/>).

E-Outlooks—By the end of October, we’ll have issued 30 reports in 2004 examining the forces shaping the future of commodity markets and trade. They’ve included reports that have focused on: U.S.-Mexico corn trade, the economic implications of soybean rust in the U.S., impacts of EU enlargement, price forecasting, and other topics. Look for at least 15 more on a wide diversity of topics by year end!

Newsletters—ERS will be issuing over 100 regularly scheduled outlook reports in 14 series in 2005—the same number as in 2004. Look for the 2005 calendar posting in late October—which also includes the posting schedule for exchange rates, macroeconomics, and other data products.

Amber Waves—ERS’s new flagship magazine was inaugurated in February 2003, and a significant portion of its content draws on our outlook program. Look for upcoming pieces on structural change in the U.S.-Canada hog market, pressures on China’s exchange rate, and other topics.

Enhancing Timeliness and Value-Added in Data Delivery

Market Analysis & Trade Electronic Reporting System (MATERS)—This project is improving data access through queriable databases and standardized formats; users also will be able to view and download charts. A redesign of the feedgrains database will be the prototype.

Agricultural Resource Management Study (ARMS)—ARMS data, based on an ERS-NASS survey of farm households, is being made more user-friendly! In November, concurrent with our 2004 farm income forecast, ERS will be unrolling an easy-to-use ARMS delivery instrument that provides one-stop shopping and a queriable database from which users can develop cross-tabular comparisons. Data on the site include income, wealth, and other financial indicators; production costs; cropping practices; and farm structural characteristics, as well as summary financial statements.

Usability Initiative—Help us improve ERS data products! We need volunteers to participate in usability research, focus groups, and other types of product evaluations, either in-person in D.C. or over the phone. To sign up, please e-mail Brenda Powell (bapowell@ers.usda.gov).

Analytical Transparency

“Models on the Web”—ERS is moving toward more downloadable models on our website. In October, we’re posting three Excel models, updated monthly, allowing users to use futures prices to forecast the upcoming CCP rate for corn, soybeans, and wheat. Look for more models-on-the-web!

“Behind-the-Scenes” Calculations—We’re also providing step-by-step detail on the derivation of some of our outlook projections. Our first posted calculations are for food use of wheat and wheat exports; see <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Wheat/wheatfooduse.htm> and <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Wheat/wheattrade.htm> for details.

Leveraging Cooperators to Enhance Our Ability to Analyze Markets

Conversion Factor Initiative—ERS will be working with the University of Minnesota and others to update conversion factors to refine our estimates of food use, trade, and other variables. We plan to form a “consortium” of government, university, consultant, and industry experts who contribute to developing the most up-to-date factors possible.

Cooperative Agreements—Starting in October, LMIC is the new “home” for meat scanner data (which is linked through the ERS website). We also have many agreements with other universities, on topics such as: economic impacts of feeder pig imports from Canada, demand for HRS and HRW wheat, impact of USDA reports on livestock futures prices, and many more.

Stakeholder Meeting—On November 18th, ERS’s Market and Trade Economics Division will be looking for input from stakeholders as we develop our biennial plan. Are you interested in participating? If so, let me know—there are a limited number of slots available.

Other New Directions

Commodity Yearbooks—ERS is considering eliminating hard-copy commodity yearbooks in favor of real-time table/chart-based yearbooks on the web (in both Excel and pdf). Comments?

Global Markets/High-Value Products—We have a new program of work focusing on global markets and high-value (non-bulk) products. Look for new publications this winter, as well as a “global food markets” briefing room, which examines trends in global consumer food demand, factors affecting this demand, and their impact on the on-going evolution of food supply chains.

Food Scanner Data—ERS is in the process of acquiring scanner data that will provide much more detailed and timely information on food prices, sales, and purchases by household type by specific product categories (for example, prices for low-carb vs. “regular” items).

Diet, Knowledge, and Health Survey—ERS is likely to receive \$3 million to investigate consumer knowledge of food healthfulness and how consumers implement that knowledge in dietary choices. A survey module on the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (an HHS survey) is being developed that addresses, among other topics, the importance of labeling and how consumers acquire information on the links between food and health.

Commodity Market Information System (CMIS)—Milton Ericksen, an ERS employee on detail to the WAOB, is coordinating a USDA effort that focuses on the development of a web-based portal enhancing user access to critical commodity data, information, and analysis across USDA through “one-stop shopping.” ERS, WAOB, and other agencies have made significant investments in this effort.

**Questions or Comments? Please address them to
Joy Harwood, Deputy Director for Market Outlook, at jharwood@ers.usda.gov or 202-694-
5202**



Accessing Global Commodity Information from USDA 's

Foreign Agricultural Service

Market intelligence lies at the root of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) effort to promote exports. FAS acquires data from satellite imagery, foreign statistics, and through its global network of offices in over 130 countries. In Washington, D.C., FAS' Commodity and Marketing Program (CMP) has the responsibility to analyze this information along with the World Agricultural Outlook Board, Economic Research Service and other USDA agencies, to publish short term world production, supply and demand (PS&D) estimates on a monthly basis. FAS commodity knowledge supports USDA on issues of market access, food aid, export credits, and technical assistance and provides a source of unbiased information for the market.

FAS Online and New Data Products

You can tap into the FAS information network of agricultural counselors, attaches, and trade officers stationed abroad, and analysts, marketing specialists, negotiators, and related specialists in Washington, DC through the Internet at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov>. Through this webpage, you can quickly go to specific commodity web sites with analysis, circulars, and timely news items, often related to market access or competitive issues faced by U.S. exporters.

U.S. Trade Internet System: USDA has released a searchable, web-based U.S. export and import trade system with data for agricultural, fishery, and forestry products. This dynamic web based system is designed to service frequent requests for trade data from farmers; industry associations; federal, congressional and state officials; university researchers; and journalists. The new database is searchable at any level of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States. Since initial implementation, many user-requested features have been added to the application to provide increased flexibility and enhance system capability. Clicking on areas within the body of the report accesses some of these new features. Some features are activated from the toolbar across the bottom of the output. Find US Trade Online at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/ustrade/>

USDA FAS PS&D Online: FAS is in the process of re-engineering the PS&D online system to improve internal data storage and collection. The next version of the PS&D online system is due out in 2005 and will include an option for the prior month's forecast, a "My PSD" option and other improvements.

Users can already use the web-based browser to instantly access and download USDA forecasts after lockup, including fruits and vegetables that are not part of USDA's lockup procedures. Users may select from a menu of pre-defined tables categorized by commodity or by commodity group, or create custom queries for specific commodities, attributes and/or countries. The system enables you to view queried data on screen or download it as a file that you can open with your spreadsheet or database program. A yearly release schedule allows users to pre-plan data availability. Use this system at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/psd/>

USDA's Crop Explorer Helps Analysts Track AgroMeteorological Data Worldwide: A new on-line web site, *Crop Explorer*, provides easy-to-read crop condition information for most agricultural regions in the

world. With this data, U.S. and international producers, traders, researchers, and the public can access weather and satellite information used by agricultural economists and scientists who predict crop production worldwide. The site includes more than 9,500 charts and pages. Through a partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), daily satellite imagery is available for select agricultural areas approximately six hours after acquisition. It has been popular with users and we plan to add more areas. Reservoir heights for over 60 key reservoirs are being monitored providing important information for irrigation districts. Weather and satellite data are updated every ten days. The crop explorer site can be found at internet address: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/pecad>. Click on Crop Explorer. For further information, please contact the Production Estimates and Crop Assessment Division at (202) 720-0888.

World Production, Market and Trade Reports (Circulars)

The *World Market and Trade Reports* provide the latest analysis and data on a number of agricultural commodities, outlining the current supply, demand and trade estimates for the United States and many major foreign countries. FAS releases monthly updates for cotton, grain, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables, and world agricultural production and biannual updates on meat and dairy products. Field crop publications are released on the business day following release of the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE). Horticultural publications are published at beginning of each month. Coffee and sugar estimates are released twice a year. FAS is experimenting with early release versions of several commodity circulars including cotton, tobacco, and world production. These releases have been popular with users and we plan more early data releases. Find FAS' current commodity information at <http://www.fas.usda.gov/currwmt.html>

Global Agricultural Information Network (Attache Reports)

This electronic reporting system, covering all major crop and livestock products, provides timely information to U.S. exporters and commodity analysts and is a resource to aid USDA in determining global production, supply, and demand estimates. It provides information on policies and market demand that affect the sales of U.S. agricultural products worldwide. Reaching beyond traditional commodity reporting, this system also provides updates on high value foods, fishery and forestry products, trade policy monitoring, and sector reports on food processors and the hotel and restaurant industry abroad. The foreign-based staff of FAS submits about 3,000 reports each year. You may register to receive reports on a specific country, commodity, or per single issue. Reports are at FAS Online: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/scripts/faspush/default.asp>

AgExporter Magazine

A monthly magazine for businesses selling farm products overseas, this publication provides tips on exporting, identifies markets with the greatest sales potential and updates readers on major market access issues. A recent edition tackled issues in the Andean countries, Mexico, the European Community and Honduras. Register for AgExporter at FAS Online. <http://www.fas.usda.gov/>

Export Sales Report

Weekly export sales reports serve as a timely early warning system on the possible impact of agricultural obligations on U.S. supplies and prices. The data is the aggregate of the previous week's sales and exports of U.S. exporters. The data can be used, for example, to assess the level of export demand, to determine where markets exist, and to assess the relative position of different commodities in those markets. This monitoring system provides a constant stream of up-to-date information on the quantity of U.S. agricultural commodities that are sold abroad.

Last year was the 30th anniversary of the weekly *U.S. Export Sales* report at USDA. In CY 2002, the value of U.S. agricultural exports monitored by the report was about \$23.5 billion. Although the report has been in existence for awhile, we are continually working to improve the information flow to the public. To that end, we are developing an on-line data query system for the *U.S. Export Sales Report*. It is still in development, however we are designing it similar to the US Trade query system. The Export Sales database is expected to be operational late this year or early next year.

On the U.S. Export Sales Homepage, we have added an archived folder that contains all the weekly reports back to 1998. In addition, there are spreadsheets by commodity showing aggregated sales and exports for the current and next marketing year each week back to 1990.

As always, the full US Export Sale report is published on the FAS Homepage every Thursday at 8:30 am eastern time. Find the Export Sales Report at:

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/export-sales/esrd1.html>

FAS Quarterly Reference Guide to World Horticultural Trade

The FAS Quarterly Reference Guide to World Horticulture Trade comprises the following four issues:

1. Production, Supply, and Distribution Edition: This **January** publication includes 5 years of production, supply, and distribution data for over 30 products. Additional information is available on the Web at: **<http://www.fas.usda.gov/psd/>**
2. Charts Edition: This **April** publication includes topics such as major trade trends and also articles on specific countries and products.
3. Trade Data Edition (**July**)
4. Trade Policy Edition (**December**)

These publications and more, including links to the new FAS Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) databases, are available on the Horticultural & Tropical Products (HTP) Division Homepage at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/http/>. The HTP Homepage is updated weekly with the latest information on policy and technical developments affecting trade in horticultural commodities. The analytical articles formerly published in *World Horticultural Trade and U.S. Export Opportunities* are now updated on the HTP Homepage. For further information on this site, please contact Nancy Hirschhorn at (202) 720-2974.

If you have comments on the information above, please contact Randy Zeitner, Assistant Deputy Administrator for Analysis, CMP, FAS at (202) 720-7792 or randy.zeitner@fas.usda.gov



FOREIGN TRADE DIVISION

Each month the Foreign Trade Division of the United States Census Bureau (Census) releases the “U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services “ report which is **one** of the principal economic indicators for the United States. This report along with other information can be found on our Web site at: www.census.gov/trade Information available includes:

- “U.S. International Trade in Goods & Services,” current and historical issues
- Information on the Automated Export System (AES)
- Schedule B commodity classification search
- Export and import statistics by country or commodity
- U.S. foreign trade export regulations

WHAT’S NEW?

- ***Statistical Corrections***
The U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Division, issues commodity-specific corrections in response to investigations initiated by the community of data users. Updates will be posted at least once every two weeks. The data is sorted by commodity code, affected statistical year and month, and posted date. These corrections can be found on our Website at <http://www.census.gov/tradestats>.

It is important to contact Census “immediately” with any questions on our published statistics. It is easier for Census to verify current rather than prior year statistics.

- ***Request for Export Documentation by Foreign Governments***
Census is requesting that information of the SED or Automated Export System record not be provided to foreign governments. The information contained on the SED is confidential. More information can be found on our Website at <http://www.census.gov/trade>.

DATA QUALITY

In order for Census to accurately analyze, review, correct and publish quality statistics, we continuously interact with other government agencies. Census and USDA have established a working group which established liaisons within each agency to communicate and attempt to resolve data discrepancies in a timely manner. In addition, Census receives the monthly Grain Report from USDA. This report is used by Census to ensure that the statistics published by the two agencies are consistent.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Main Foreign Trade Page: <http://www.census.gov/trade>

FTD AES Page: <http://www.census.gov/aes>
<http://www.census.gov/naics> AES Hotline AESDirect Help Desk
(800) 549-0595 (877)-715-4433

FTD Reference Page: <http://www.census.gov/tradereference>

FTD Statistics Page: <http://www.census.gov/tradestats>
Foreign Trade Data Products:
(301) 763-2227 or Fax: (301) 457-2647

FTD Regulations Page: <http://www.census.gov/traderegs>

FTD Schedule B: <http://www.census.gov/scheduleb>

FTD Shippers's Export Declaration: <http://www.census.gov/sed>

FTD FT900 Press Release: <http://www.census.gov/ft900>

Correspondence can be written or faxed to:

Foreign Trade Division
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20233-0001
Fax: (301) 457-1159

Inquiries about our published statistics can be written, E-mailed, or faxed to:

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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE STATISTICS DIVISION

What's New and What's Changing

NASS Mission Statement: **To provide timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. Agriculture**

What's New

Livestock

A special report, *Licensed Dairy Herds*, was issued on February 17, 2004. This report contains the annual average number of dairy operations that were licensed to sell milk during 2002 and 2003, by State and United States. NASS will begin publishing this data series annually in the 2005 February *Milk Production* report.

A new annual report, *Price Reactions - Livestock Reports*, was issued on February 26, 2004. This report contained annual average and monthly cattle and hog price reactions to the USDA-NASS monthly *Cattle on Feed* and *Quarterly Hogs and Pigs* reports.

A special report, *Livestock Operations, 2003 Summary*, was issued in April 2004. This report contained the operations estimates originally included in each of the respective cattle, hog, and sheep annual reports. Subsequently, this report and the *Farms and Land in Farms* report will be combined into a new publication titled, *Farms, Land in Farms, and Livestock Operations* published in January of each year.

A new table, Supply and Utilization of Milk, United States, calculating butterfat and nonfat solids was added to the *Dairy Products 2003 Summary* released in April 2004. The butterfat and solids nonfat equivalence table will replace the U.S. Supply and Utilization of Whole and Skim Milk tables beginning with the *Dairy Products 2004 Summary*, in April 2005.

Monthly U.S. sour cream production was added to the *Dairy Products 2003 Summary*, released in April 2004.

The combined *U.S. and Canadian Cattle* report for July was expanded to include historical data. Combined and individual country data from 2000 to the present were included in this report.

A new report, *Livestock Track Records*, issued in September 2004 contained track records of U.S. Livestock and Poultry production. These track records measure the difference between the first and final estimates for cattle, dairy, hogs, sheep, broilers, turkeys, and eggs.

An updated *U.S. Breeding Herd Structure* report was released in late September 2004. This is an update from the previous version released in September 2002.

Environmental, Economics, and Demographics

The *Agricultural Chemical Usage 2003 Nursery and Floriculture Summary* was published in August. This is only the second time chemical usage data have been published for this industry. Data are now collected and published every three years.

The Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) is USDA's primary vehicle for collecting data about production practices, inputs, farm costs, and financial conditions. This year's sample was greatly expanded to include over 30,000 operations. USDA can now publish National and Regional income and asset statistics about U.S. agriculture with much greater accuracy. The increased sample size may also allow for State level expenditure data to be published for states as early as July 2005.

The *Farm Production Expenditures 2003 Summary* included a new breakdown for fuel expenditures. The categories published now include diesel fuel, gasoline, LP gas, and other fuels. These expenditures are further published by economic sales class, type of farm, and farm production region.

Historic Revisions

The following publications were released as a result of the 5-year historical revision process. Each report is available in printed or electronic form.

NASS-SB993	<i>Agricultural Land Values and Cash Rents-Final Estimates 1999-2003</i>	03//12//04
NASS-SB989	<i>Cattle - Final Estimates 1999-2003</i>	04//30//04
NASS-SB980	<i>Chickens and Eggs - Final Estimates 1998-2002</i>	04//29//04
NASS-SB997	<i>Citrus Fruits - Final Estimates 1997-2002</i>	08//20//04
NASS-SB999	<i>Crop Values - Final Estimates 1997-2002</i>	10//15//04
NASS-SB991	<i>Farms Numbers and Land in Farms - Final Estimates 1998-2002</i>	02//27//04
NASS-SB982	<i>Field Crops - Final Estimates 1997-2002</i>	03//17//04
NASS-SB986	<i>Hogs and Pigs - Final Estimates 1998-2002</i>	03//22//04
NASS-SB992	<i>Honey - Final Estimates 1998-2002</i>	04//29//04
NASS-SB1002	<i>Livestock Operations - Final Estimates 1998-2002</i>	04//30//04
NASS-SB995	<i>Meat Animals, PDI - Final Estimates 1998-2002</i>	05//21//04
NASS-SB988	<i>Milk Cows and Production - Final Estimates 1998-2002</i>	04//30//04
NASS-SB996	<i>Milk Disposition and Income - Final Estimates 1998-2002</i>	05//21//04
NASS-SB985	<i>Noncitrus Fruits and Nuts - Final Estimates 1997-2002</i>	05//21//04
NASS-SB998	<i>Potatoes and Sweet Potatoes - Final Estimates 1997-2002</i>	08//20//04
NASS-SB994	<i>Poultry Production and Value - Final Estimates 1998-2002</i>	04//29//04
NASS-SB984	<i>Rice Stocks - Final Estimates 1998-2003</i>	03//17//04
NASS-SB990	<i>Sheep and Goats - Final Estimates 1999-2003</i>	04//30//04
NASS-SB983	<i>Stocks of Grains, Oilseeds, and Hay - Final Estimates 1998-2003</i>	03//17//04
NASS-SB981	<i>Turkeys - Final Estimates 1998-2002</i>	04//29//04
NASS-SB987	<i>Vegetables - Final Estimates 1998-2003</i>	05//28//04

Census

The 2002 Census of Agriculture results were released on June 3, 2004. Various data products are available on the NASS website. National, State, and County level data can be found in Volume 1. State and County Profiles, Congressional District Profiles, and the U.S. Agricultural Atlas are also available.

The results of the 2003 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey will be released November 15, 2004.

What's Changing

The following proposed major program changes are under final review. If adopted, most will be implemented beginning January 2005.

Crops

On-farm and off-farm sunflower stocks will be published in the March *Grain Stocks* report. This change was requested by the National Sunflower Association and will provide the industry with middle of the marketing year stocks estimates. Currently, NASS provides only an ending stocks estimate in September.

U.S. level White Winter Wheat production estimates will be separated into Soft White Winter and Hard White Winter. White Spring Wheat production estimates will be separated at the U.S. level into Soft White Spring and Hard White Spring. State level percent of production estimates for these new classes of wheat will be published in the September *Small Grains Annual Summary*.

The pilot haylage/forage program will be expanded to 18 States (CA, IA, ID, IL, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, NM, NY, OH, PA, SD, TX, VT, WA, and WI). West Virginia will be dropped from the program. All and alfalfa haylage, along with all and alfalfa forage, will be published.

Milled rice will be dropped from the Off-Farm Rice Stocks program. Milled rice is not a traded commodity. Since 1994, the range of milled rice stocks has been from 3.595 - 7.481 million cwt. Rice stocks will be published as On-Farm Rough Stocks, Off-Farm Rough Stocks, and All Rough Stocks of rice in the Rice Stocks Report for all States. The three rough rice stocks categories of "In Mills Attached to Warehouses," "In Warehouses Not Attached to Mills," and "In Ports or In Transit" will be combined to create an Off-Farm category.

Flaxseed planted acreage estimates for MN, MT, ND, and SD will be published in the March *Prospective Plantings* report.

Biotechnology variety statistics will no longer be published in the March *Prospective Plantings* report, but will continue to be published in the June *Acreage* report. June is best time frame to make these estimates considering that all plantings are nearly complete for the crops for which biotech varieties are being estimated. Also, the track record of March indicated acreages devoted to biotech varieties is poor for all crops at the U.S. level since actual plantings can change significantly from intentions.

Livestock

The eleven individual State estimates will be discontinued in the July *Cattle* release but all present U.S. estimates will be continued.

On October 29, 2004, NASS will issue a combined *U.S. and Canadian Hogs and Pigs* report. This is a result of a joint effort by Statistics Canada and NASS to release the total hogs, market hogs, breeding, sows farrowed, and pig crop in one publication.

Monthly *Milk Production* will be expanded to include Oregon, Colorado, and Kansas. This action will increase the published States from 20 to 23. The February *Milk Production* will include Puerto Rico as an additional line in the annual revised totals. Puerto Rico will not be added into the U.S. totals.

The Sheep estimation program will be expanded to include Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

A Goat estimation program will be established for the United States. U.S. and selected State estimates will be published for all goats, Angora goats, milk goats, and meat and other goats.

Non-Federally Inspected data for goat and bison slaughter will be collected and published in the *Livestock Slaughter Annual* publication. A new table will be developed for inclusion.

The annual *Poultry Production and Value* release will include Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico will not be included in U.S. totals.

Following are several changes being made to the *Chickens and Eggs* reports:

- The January monthly report will be released the 3rd week of January instead of the end of January. This will put January on the same schedule as the other monthly releases. The release date of the annual report will be moved from the end of January to mid-February.
- The monthly release will no longer contain the “30 State” data series.
- The annual release will no longer contain layers “less than 1 year old” and “greater than 1 year old” in the December 1 Inventory. Total layers will continue to be published.
- The pullet estimates for “less than 13 weeks” and “13 to 20 weeks old” series that are part of the December 1 Inventory will no longer be published. An estimate of total pullets only will be published for December 1 Inventory.
- The definition of “Pullets” will be changed from “Pullets, less than 20 weeks old” to “Domesticated female chickens which have not produced useable eggs, excluding broilers.”
- The definition of “Pullets added” will be changed from “One day old Pullet chicks added to your Flock” to “Pullet chicks less than 3 days old added to your Pullet Flocks.”

Summary of Questions and Comments

October 18, 2004

Note: The following write-up presents a topical summary of issues discussed during the afternoon open forum. Material is presented in essentially chronological order—except all discussions on a topic have been consolidated, if a specific topic came up more than once.

NASS AGRICULTURAL PRICES ANNUAL: Rich Allen from NASS opened the forum by calling attention to this long time NASS publication, issued in July each year. The publication pulls together nearly all NASS price and index series for the previous year and presents the revised estimates for each series. However, it does not include any "new" estimates not already published and available on the NASS web site. Rich asked if anyone actually entered data from this annual publication or if everyone picked up price data when they were originally published. NASS is considering dropping the publication (both in paper and electronic form) and saving the time and effort to compile and verify all tables each year. Only one person responded and they acknowledged that they considered it a helpful reference but did not pull data from it.

AMS Cut-Out Reports: Jim Robb of the Livestock Marketing Information Center raised a number of questions or concerns about AMS and NASS reports. First was his comment that all related data need to be available on the web site as the cut-out report data series are adjusted. Another person commented that interpretation of the cut-out reports recently would imply negative packer margins but other sources indicate that margins are still positive. This person later asked if anything was happening in pork cut-out reports. Someone else emphasized that the animals being slaughtered have changed and the cut-out percentages should be changed. One final cut-out question was whether, and how soon, recalculated data before 2003 might be made available.

Erin Morris from AMS responded that they are working to add improved pork cut-outs. For the last two years, surveys have been sent to the industry requesting current yields so that AMS can update the cut-out and also increase the weight of the pork carcass that these calculations represent. However, the response from industry has thus far been minimal. Additional recalculated beef cut-out data prior to 2003 are not available.

Other AMS Reports: Jim Robb's other comments on AMS reports included: There seem to be frequent errors in the weekly Grain Market News report. AMS report formats are being revised so often it becomes difficult for users to be sure they are accessing the right data. Some additional reports, like cull cows, need to be put on line. Jim did compliment AMS for their efforts to add as many reports from the Mandatory Reporting System as they have. However, he wondered if some of the new "muscle cuts" are being correctly classified. He also suggested that more lamb reports are needed and, when weight ranges are presented, an average weight should be provided as is done with some other livestock reports. Another person later asked that if feedlot cattle were getting bid at "\$131 on the rack, with heavies out," would these sales be on the negotiated grid or be in a different purchase category.

Erin Morris responded to Jim Robb's issues by stating that they would look at the quality control procedures for the Grain Market News report, they would look at the lamb and sheep reports for any possible expansion, and that she hoped that the AMS Data Mart and the later data portal would help to make data consistent and more easily accessible. With respect to the question regarding the "new muscle cuts," all packers must provide their specs so that AMS can ensure that all cuts are reported correctly. With respect to the question regarding the purchase type of cattle bid as "\$131 on the rack, with heavies out," if, for example, the heavies were bid \$5 back, the transaction would be in the negotiated grid.

NASS July CATTLE report: Jim Robb expressed his concern about NASS plans to drop all state level cattle data from the midyear report. He stated that as much data as possible should be available for evaluating emerging issues such as the BSE concerns in the past year.

Jim Aikman of Rafter J. Bar C, LLC commented that the NASS decision to drop the publication of the 7-state cattle *Cattle on Feed* data series was not a problem since the individual state data still existed. However, dropping state level midyear data takes out one way of trying to evaluate cattle cycles. Later in the meeting, Jim Aikman said he had reconsidered and commented the state level midyear data have not been consistent enough to help his analysis.

Steve Wiyatt responded for NASS. He stated that the NASS state offices did not pick up much sentiment for keeping the midyear state data when they discussed the proposed estimating program changes. Steve commented that Jim Robb did make a good point on BSE analysis.

NASS Hog and Pigs Estimates: The last of Jim Robb's opening questions was whether NASS has now increased the June sample size since the monthly survey program was eliminated. Dan Kerestes responded for NASS that the approach of increasing the June sample size was considered. However, there are advantages of keeping most operations in the sample for an entire year so quarter to quarter indications can be used in addition to direct expansions. NASS samplers also determined that, since nearly all large operations are already in the sample, it would take tremendous increases in the numbers of small operations sampled to make any sizable improvement in estimation precision.

US/CANADA Hog Estimates: Wiley Houchins of APC, Inc. commended NASS and Statistics Canada for pursuing the joint hog statistics releases.

Steve Wiyatt clarified that the combined reports will still have some differences in reference dates such as U.S. data relating to December 1 and Canada data being January 1.

Equine Data: Wiley Houchins also commented on the dearth of equine data for the United States. The Census data for horses on farms do not include much of the total population and people have to use widely varying private estimates. Rich Allen asked Wiley if he has found the specific equine studies that some NASS state offices have done with state funding to be helpful. Wiley responded that those have been well done and do include nearly all equine in those states.

Steve Wiyatt clarified that NASS state offices that conducted the specials surveys had to go through extensive list building processes and expand the area frame samples for the specific studies since most horses are not on farms. Most locations with horses are not classified as Agricultural under the North American Industry Classification System. Steve also pointed out that NASS has requested but never received funding for a U.S. estimating program.

Soybeans Export Correction: Dan Basse of AgResource started an interesting exchange of information by asking how the correction of soybeans exports by Census Bureau came about. The following summarizes the major points that came out of the discussion.

There are three agencies at this meeting which get involved in constantly tracking exports: Census Bureau, World Agricultural Outlook Board, and the Export Sales Office of FAS.

Jerry Bange of WAOB clarified that Census Bureau is the official source of U.S. trade data and USDA must adopt Census figures. When there are apparent discrepancies in the data, USDA notifies Census and, if Census concurs, Census has agreed to provide USDA with written certification acknowledging the correction. At that point, USDA will use the corrected data in its analysis and publications.

Keith Menzie of WOAB commented that the three agencies are communicating much more with each other and thus are working better together. Venita Powell of the Census Bureau verified that they are receptive to questions and concerns and they were able to find the problem which Keith Menzie brought to their attention. When submitting investigations to Census, it is crucial to be specific and identify the grade or quality of the commodity (i.e., #1, #2, etc.), not just the total volume. This enables analysts to be more focused on the main areas of concern. The key people who follow through on concerns are Lily Burgess and Christine Dames, both of the Census Bureau. They work back through their data sources and encourage them to check their records. If Customs has made an errors in transcribing data, it may be easy to find the problem. If the original documents have errors, it will take longer to determine what errors were made. The standard policy is to then send a letter to the organization which originally raised the concern, plus inform USDA of the change that is being made.

Christine Dames of Census and Tim Rocke of FAS agreed that they do cross reference each other's reports in the hope of finding discrepancies earlier.

Jerry Gidel of North America Risk Management stated his concern that the change in Census figures was right after a holiday and was made without a press release. Users had trouble figuring out where the correction had been made and there were about three days of confusion among data users. Jerry felt that the Census Bureau doesn't understand how the data are being used. Jerry Bange agreed 17 or 18 million bushels might not seem like much in terms of total exports but there was a significant market impact. However, he felt that this year's experience gave everyone at Census a better appreciation.

Venita Powell commented that Census had implemented a new web feature and the correction got posted faster than expected. She also clarified that hard copy corrections are only published in June. Thus, next June's report will cover all 2004 data.

Rich Allen asked Venita if Census issues a press release when corrections are posted. Venita clarified that they normally do not. The Census Bureau has a policy of sending a letter with corrections to the requestor at the same time that the corrections are posted to the web.

Art Latterner of FAS pointed out that there is a U.S. trade system team of WAOB, ERS, and FAS staff members which reacts to Census data changes. The team meets quarterly but also whenever there has been a change to be sure that USDA is properly interpreting the impact of the change.

Allan Harari of Intrefluer USA concluded that Census Bureau would benefit from the specific communication procedures that the USDA agencies seem to have.

NASS ACREAGE ESTIMATES: Megan Bocken of the La Salle Group of Refco, Inc. asked how NASS incorporates insurance numbers into acreage reports. There were reports of up to 2 million acres of "prevented plantings" that didn't seem to be reflected in NASS reports.

Steve Wiyatt explained that the NASS estimates in the *Acreage* report at the end of June are based on surveys conducted the first part of June. If there is more acreage left to be planted than normal, for example due to weather conditions, NASS will conduct reinterviews in July. If any changes are indicated, adjusted planted acres would be published in the *August Crop Production* report. NASS does track Farm Service Agency certified plantings data as they are compiled and will fine tune planted acres in the *October Crop Production* report, if any changes are needed.

Distiller's Dried Grain (DDG) from Ethanol: Don Cekander of Fimat opened a series of comments on DDG grain by stating there are questions on the impact of DDG coming back to the livestock market. The questions included what grains are being displaced, what markets are being the most affected, and what is the dollar value of the DDG. Jerry Gidel asked if Census manufacturing survey data on ethanol production are on a monthly or quarterly basis. He doesn't expect the industry to start a data series like NOPA, but agriculture needs more than the DOE monthly figures. Brad Fuller of Western Horizons Corp. stated that we need to know how much of the alfalfa and cotton hulls markets are being displaced by ethanol DDG.

Jerry Bange mentioned that the USDA Outlook Forum in February is planning a session on "coproducts" like DDG. He commented that such a large portion of the corn crop is used for ethanol production that WAOB now breaks out ethanol use in the Corn Supply and Demand table. Bill Tierney of WAOB mentioned that Census used to do a monthly milling and grinding report but cut it to quarterly. He doesn't know how often they collect the data. Venita Powell commented that she formerly worked in the Manufacturing/Construction Division of Census. Bill Bostic and Judy Dodds are currently the key people in that division.

Cotton Inspections for Export: Brad Fuller suggested it would be helpful to have a weekly cotton inspection report just as there is for grains. Bill Nelson of A.G. Edwards asked if there was some law against a weekly cotton figure.

Art Latterner of FAS commented that there is essentially a 1972 law that is being followed. Jerry Bange clarified that the specifications setting up the Export Sales report were an outgrowth of the "great grain robbery" experience and the provisions were for food grains, feed grains, and oilseeds, not cotton.

China Data: Don Frahm of Informa Economics, Inc. opened a series of comments on China by asking Jerry Bange what Chinese data have been improved. Jerry responded that the information provided by China is still not satisfactory with respect to completeness or accuracy, but that more data are now available because Chinese officials are more willing to talk to outsiders and more numbers are coming out. However, there still appears to be political constraints of the release of some numbers. He feels that the China National Grain and Oilseeds Information Center (NGOIC) is trying to collect and release more information and would like to be even more open. Chinese production numbers, under the purview of China's National Bureau of Statistics are believed to be accurate. However, area numbers, no matter what the source, are believed to be less reliable. Grain stocks data remain the big issue. Balance sheets produced by China's Ministry of Agriculture represent the work of several different agencies and sometimes defy logic. There is a lot of Chinese history to overcome but information flow is improving. Don Frahm asked if any groups are publishing good price data for China. Jerry Bange said that the NGOIC Center is among the better sources.

Jerry Gidel commented that it sounds like officials in Beijing are trying to respond positively. Jerry Bange responded that government agencies are controlling relatively less stocks than in the past. A larger proportion of stocks are now in private hands in the provinces. The government is having difficulty quantifying what is not under government control. For example, there have been some reports of stocks being used as collateral but banks sometimes can not find the stocks in question. Jerry commented that China remains as a very bureaucratic society. If the NGOIC is permitted to continue its efforts to expand the amount of information available to the market, everyone will benefit.

Bill Tierney stated that China doesn't trust the world rice market. China feels the market is too thin and will never permit itself to depend on imports. People can construct stocks-to-use ratios for several commodities but some of the implied relationships are questionable.

Allan Harari asked Jerry Bange if the NGOIC reports are now in English or just in Chinese. Jerry verified they can be obtained in English. Allan then asked if there is anyone in USDA, CIA, or any other U.S. agency who has any special intelligence in China. Jerry responded that USDA prefers not to use classified sources.

Bill Lapp of ConAgra commented that he has long felt that FAS should assign half of their attaches to China since there are so many issues. He also suggested that Fred Crook be sent to China to get to the bottom of issues for ERS. Joy Harwood of ERS clarified

that Fred Crook, a former ERS China analyst, has retired from the agency and is now a consultant on China issues. ERS does have three experienced China analysts. Several ERS reports on China have been released in recent months, including one on China's corn market, one on the wheat market, and one on the macro economy. A report is due out by the end of October on the China soybean market. There is an ERS team currently in China looking at the credit and banking system.

Randy Zeitner from FAS commented that FAS has more than 40 people in China, if you include Hong Kong, including 10-12 Americans. That amounts to a quarter of their foreign service staff. The big issue that is being studied now is horticulture. How can the United States compete and where will the extra Chinese acreage come from? FAS also takes advantage of information from U.S. companies working in China. Randy encouraged the participants to access the online attache reports.

New ERS Features: Rich Allen asked the participants if anyone had comments on the new features which were highlighted in the opening presentation. Terry Francl of the Farm Bureau applauded the efforts to provide more electronic data. However, he had expected more timely updates and more comprehensive data sets. He found that retail trade figures are not updated monthly and that energy data are updated only twice a year. There also is nothing which monitors energy use at the farm level and what people are doing to counter the higher fuel prices.

Joy Harwood said she had been communicating with Terry. She had staff check on Ag Outlook tables and see how often they are updated. The answer was that most were updated faster than Terry has observed. She knows that many people would like more farm income updates. There will be updates next year in February, August and November. Energy cost increases are particularly important for cost of production. She thanked Terry for the input.

Cold Storage Beef details: Kevin Bost of Wendy's International asked if NASS could provide more categories of beef holdings in the Cold Storage report, similar to the detailed pork data instead of just boned and boneless categories. Dan Kerestes replied that NASS will certainly look into it. It will likely be an issue of whether managers of the storage actually have more details about the beef holdings. NASS is publishing all the information presently being collected on the questionnaire.

Corn and Soybean Yields: Rich Feltes of Refco asked, in light of the record September to October forecasted corn yield increases, whether there was an error in the September farmer survey or in the September objective yield survey. Steve Wyatt responded that there wasn't an error in either survey. September surveys indicated a large ear count but the crop needed good weather. Much of the growing area did get very favorable weather and ear weights are coming in much higher than could have been anticipated.

Joe Prusacki of NASS pointed out that each objective yield sample is classified monthly by the maturity stage (milk, dough, dent, etc.). The forecast models have been built by maturity stage, using all samples in those stages over several years.

Todd Preszler of Bunge commented that data users get a couple data tables each year such as ear counts by state. He would like more data in order to fit models. Jerry Gidel

agreed, saying he would like to have NASS ear weight data. Rich Allen clarified that NASS has provided the number of ears table as a service, since the data are nearly complete by September. NASS has never released weight per ear and has a policy of not releasing those data. However, data users can approximate ear weight by using state average yield and the ear counts to derive an average ear weight. The other remaining component, harvesting loss, does not vary greatly by year.

Joe Prusacki then showed a chart of ears per acre and derived ear weight for all recent years. The chart demonstrated that the forecasted ear weight increased from August to September 2004. It then took a tremendous increase because of the September weather and is now at about the same level as 1994.

Don Frahm asked how much of the variation in yield is due to weight per ear compared to the number of ears. He would guess that it is about 80%. Rich Allen agreed that the September to October increase was based mainly on weight per ear but numbers of ears per acre are also up from last year.

Don Frahm said his customers often ask how much of the NASS forecast comes from the subjective (farmer) survey and how much comes from the objective survey. He asked Rich Allen if there is a formula for each month. Rich first clarified that the farmer survey is a probability sample of producers. The objective yield states normally cover about 80 percent of the U.S. production. Thus, many states have only indications from the farmers survey available. Each survey provides indications that are compared to the same survey results in prior years and the final yields in those years, both at the state level and during review by the Agricultural Statistics Board. Keep in mind that both sets of indications are affected by improvements in crop breeding. The objective yield forecasting models usually are based on the previous 5 years of actual sample data so it takes time for the full effect of improved breeding to be realized. It is problematic how quickly producers interpret the impact of improved breeding. Staff members do examine all possible indications and determine the best forecast based on those indications. There is not one set formula. Usually, the farmer survey and the objective yield indications are in close agreement. That surely was the case for September and October 2004.

Joe Prusacki then showed the corresponding chart which displayed pod counts from the objective yield and derived pod weight. Pod weight was relatively constant from 1999 to 2002. Final pod weight dropped considerably in 2003 but the October 2004 indication looks more like weights from the middle 1990's.

Bill Nelson of A.G. Edwards commented he had noticed that NASS corn forecasts go up from September to October they almost always go up from October to November. When questioned, Bill said he thinks it has happened at least 20 of the past 30 years. [For the record: Between 1970 and 2003, the U.S. corn average yield forecast went up from September to October 20 times, went down 12 times, and rounded to same number to the tenths of a bushel twice. In all 20 years, the November average was higher than October, but the change was 1.0 bushels per acre or less in 10 of the 20 years. In 9 of those 20 years the final average yield was less than November, although 8 of the 9 were changes of 1.0 bushels per acre or less. For the 12 years that the average yield dropped from September to October, the November forecast yield was lower in 8 years, higher in 3

years, and unchanged in one year. In the 8 years that went down in both October and November, the final yield was lower still in 6 years but 4 of those were by less than one bushel.]

Rich Allen commented that he has not seen an October to November comparison series but he assured the audience that October and November judgements are made independently, based on the data available. NASS does not set a target figure in October and then "sneak" up to it.

Wheat Statistics: Bill Lapp commented on the weakness of only having quarterly grind reports from the Census. It took quite a while to see if the low carbohydrate movement was going to affect wheat milling. Bill then asked if ERS would now start bringing out more white wheat detail since NASS is going to do so. Joy Harwood indicated that ERS will be publishing in December an e-outlook report examining the market for hard white wheat. There are no current plans to provide additional hard white wheat interpretations on a regular basis, but ERS will keep on top of the issue with NASS and WAOB.

Foreign Uses of USDA Data: Allan Harari commented that he is basically an international user of USDA data. His contacts often ask him if USDA data are statistical facts or "government" figures. He has appreciated the PS&D data query capability and suggested that would be a good approach for the WASDE data. He appreciates the fact that much of the available USDA data can be downloaded into spreadsheets but some still has to be entered since only pdf files are presented. He does data gathering in many countries. At times he has been disappointed that his contacts were giving him the USDA charts for their country instead of independent evaluations. He also commented that he finds the PECAD site, which hasn't been mentioned, has some good information.

Randy Zeitner responded that he has been a Foreign Service officer and it is interesting to see what judgements locals come up with and how they evaluate other opinions about their country.

PECAD Data: Jerry Gidel stated that some of the updates to the Production Estimates and Crop Assessment Division are hard to interpret. For example, are updates going to be made weekly, every two weeks, or intermittently? There were rumors early in the year about some "bad data" being posted which was affecting 2004/2003 comparisons.

George Douvelis of FAS explained that yields on PECAD are only updated once a month but other updates are made when data are available. Their analysis system does look at imagery and data from many sources. They found this year that some of the weather grid data from the United States Air Force actually contained some old data frames for Iowa so that data series was shut down. Jerry Gidel asked George if PECAD ever put an explanation on their site about the data concerns. George acknowledged that they did not. The following note has now been posted to the Crop Explorer User Notes:

U.S. growing season April 1 to Oct. 31.: FAS/PECAD sources of data for Iowa precipitation during the main growing season were significantly different. The two sources were the U.S. Air Force Weather Agency (AFWA) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). PECAD decided to remove the charts

depicting the AFWA data from the Crop Explorer web site. As of now only WMO data charts are released to the public.

[As a further clarification: NOAA brought a new satellite on stream this year for calculating vegetation indexes. There were concerns early in the year in the stability of the data. There still are concerns about direct year to year comparisons and NASS has discontinued such comparisons on their web site.]

Biodiesel/Corn Oil: Megan Bocken commented that ethanol got considerable attention today but there was no mention of biodiesel. What is USDA doing about biodiesel? Also, will the USDA ever be issuing more information about corn oil?

Jerry Bange replied that Roger Conway, Director of the Office of Energy Policy and New Uses under the Office of the Chief Economist, would be a good bio-products contact. Keith Menzie mentioned that Mark Ash in ERS is an excellent corn oil analyst and a possible source of information.